

THE JEWISH THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY OF AMERICA
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OFFICE OF THE CHANCELLOR

CABLE ADDRESS: SEMINARY, NEW YORK

October 28, 1980

Dr. Joshua Lederberg
Rockefeller University
1230 York Avenue
New York, N.Y. 10021

Dear Dr. Lederberg:

For some time now I have been convinced that it is the responsibility of the Seminary to take a more active role in dealing with some of the major ethical issues which sensitive American Jews are confronting in their personal and professional lives. The process will be a long one and we will have to move on several different fronts simultaneously - at all times from a perspective which reflects both the legacy of the Jewish tradition and a searching, critical investigation based on the best of contemporary knowledge. But I am convinced that the time is now ripe for a project of this kind.

For the present I am writing to invite you to the first of what I hope will be a series of 2-day conferences which will bring together Seminary faculty, rabbinical alumni and a group of professionals in various fields who are serious about their Jewishness and who, I know, are struggling with some of these moral issues. I envision a group of no more than 25 to 30 people, meeting over a thirty hour span and focusing on one specific issue. Some of the participants will prepare brief position papers and others will prepare to respond - again, briefly. Most of our time should be spent in informal off-the-record discussion which will, hopefully, stretch our minds, make us aware of how in fact we do approach moral issues and, more generally, put the entire problem on our own personal and professional agendas in a more conscious and deliberate way. Eventually, it is my hope to publish a volume on Jewish ethics which will reflect the collective thinking of groups such as this one as they confront fundamental moral issues.

The theme for the first of these conferences will be the range of issues raised for the committed Jew by virtue of his citizenship in a democratic pluralistic state such as the U.S.A. Every elected Jewish official, for example, knows that his professional responsibilities may well bring him into conflict with some of his basic Jewish commitments. How is he to resolve this conflict? Does the Jewish tradition provide him with any guidance?

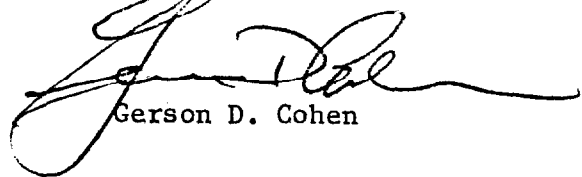
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*implications of
holocaust? — "God is dead"
modern Judaism a
political category?
widely null*

This conference will be held at the Tarrytown Hilton Hotel on Sunday and Monday, March 29 and 30, 1981. We plan to begin early Sunday afternoon after lunch and end late Monday afternoon before dinner. The Tarrytown Hilton is in Tarrytown, New York, some 45 minutes driving time from Manhattan and easily accessible by public and private transportation. Needless to say, the Seminary will cover all expenses involved in your participation. Let me also assure you that no press release on the conference will be issued without the approval of all the participants.

I very much hope it will be possible for you to be with us. I know that these issues are very much on your mind and we would all benefit greatly from your participation and counsel. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gerson D. Cohen", written over the typed name.

Gerson D. Cohen

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